

COMMERCIAL AVIATION

THE WEEK AT CROYDON

"A. Viator's" Weekly Causerie on Airline Affairs at London's Terminal and Elsewhere

LAST week's gale, which created such consternation in shipping circles, had practically no effect on air travel. A passenger who crossed from the Continent when the storm was at its height told me that it was a remarkable experience to sit in an aeroplane so steady that a brimming coffee cup did not spill a drop while one looked down at Channel boats standing on their heads.

Some years back we used to parody Mr. Jarrocks, saying "Take not out your planes on a werry windy day," but the other "werry windy" afternoon I returned from the Continent behind one of the very old hands in the airline business. He kept well above the bump zone until the English coast and then gradually descended through clouds in a long slant, which brought us over Croydon at exactly the right height at which to commence the landing circuit.

Of course, we had a bump or two getting through the clouds, but not more than the sway of a train rounding a curve, so far as discomfort was concerned. Now this is very remarkable, when you remember that five or eight years back shipping and air people made common cause of the regrettable point that neither on the sea nor in the air should we ever be rid of the risk of travel sickness.

Sabena had a bit of bad luck last week when one of their old tri-motor Fokkers (now used exclusively for freight and almost exclusively for bullion) was returning empty to Brussels and sat down a trifle suddenly on the doorstep of a chapel in Kent. The pilots walked right into a ladies' tea-party in the back premises where, it is understood, they were regaled with plum cake and large cups of tea.

Beautiful but Dumb

Considerable excitement was caused at Croydon one day last week, when it was observed that "one mannequin" was manifested as part of the inward cargo of a Paris-London plane. Stories of a beauteous American girl who covered herself with stamps and had herself posted as air mail in the States were remembered, though you can't do that there 'ere, according to G.P.O. regulations; and, anyway, where do the officials stamp such a parcel with the necessary post marks?

Anyway, the machine duly arrived from Paris and it looked for a moment as if the lady had swooned, for she was carried across the tarmac by an embarrassed official. Later (after artificial respiration had been tried) it was discovered that the mannequin was made of wax, and if you go to one of the big London stores, she is the third from the left with the green eyes and hair to match, displaying the latest in beach costume—which does not amount to much.

Zurich seems to be the fashionable resort for the younger



PROVEN: After a year of successful operation with two D.H. Dragonflies, P.L.U.N.A., Uruguay's first airline, took delivery of a D.H. 86B, which has now been carrying full passenger loads for four months. The machine is seen here with some notabilities—Mr. Ballantyne, D.H. manager in South America; Sr. Alberto Marquez Vaeza; Sta. Fleurquin; Dr. Fleurquin, a director of P.L.U.N.A.; Capt. Noack, chief pilot; and Capt. Nudelmann, pilot.

set at the moment. Last Thursday Miss Imogen Baguley flew there, quite unchaperoned, by Imperial Airways. She is five years old. Not to be outdone, the Misses Jean (4½) and Barbara (17 months) Rudd set off for Zurich on Sunday. Barbara, whose first flight it was, travelled in the care of Jean, who had done that sort of thing three or four times and had her own passport, anyway, when she was three.

British Airways, I hear, have quite settled in at Heston and had heavy traffic over the holidays. A few of their travellers arrived vaguely at Croydon and brought grist to other people's mills, but I doubt if B. A. missed them, being so busy and all.

Very disconcerting, all this moving to and fro. One wily B. A. official, who schemed to live off the Croydon-Continent route, now finds himself right under every one of his company's arriving and departing planes. He has developed amazing theories about the inadvisability of night flying. If you haven't heard an Electra, that may not convey much to you; still, as I have said before, they are nicely quiet for the people inside them.

Generous Tribute

The Editor of an American aviation journal recently paid a handsome tribute to Imperial Airways after a trip to New York-Bermuda by Pan-American and a return flight by Imperial Airways *Cavalier*. He said, "We have been at the receiving end of a lot of subtle insinuations that the British were behind in commercial aviation, but we can say with all candour that one of the greatest experiences in flying scheduled air transport lines was the New York-bound flight in *Cavalier* . . . there is nothing in the United States like *Cavalier*. If we look at the Bermuda service alone, Imperial Airways is four or five years ahead of Pan-American Airways."

Everyone knows the Imperial Airways' boats are second to none, but it takes real honesty on the part of the "opposite number" to say it so frankly.

The American attitude in this matter may be commended to certain narky souls we all know, who can never find a decent word to say of foreign aircraft and aviation. When a foreigner does a good show their silence is such that the dropping of a box of pins sounds like massed bands; but when the foreigner has bad luck, their howls are such that you wouldn't hear a ton of bombs drop.